

# OHRNET

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PLEASE NOTE OUTSIDE ISRAEL THIS WEEK IS SHLACH LECHA

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

### Like Moses

*“And Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven because of your (Moshe’s) words.’ (14:20)*

**N**o one wants to make a wedding on the day that the *gadol hador* (the greatest rabbi of the generation) passes away.

But that’s exactly what happened to us. On the day of our daughter’s marriage in Jerusalem, Rabbi Gershon Edelstein, the *gadol hador*, left this world in Bnei Brak. His funeral was large and long, as befits a great *talmid chacham*, which meant that all the eminent rabbis that we invited to officiate and participate in our wedding were left gridlocked in Bnei Brak at the time when the wedding was supposed to start in Yerushalyim.

What could we do? We started the wedding. A bride and groom must go to the chupa. When it came to the *Sheva Berachot* – the seven blessings bestowed on the newly married couple – we had no great rabbis to give the blessings, so we chose those nearest and dearest to us instead.

A thought passed through my head. I saw that my friends to whom we had given the blessings were genuinely touched. Now, eminent rabbis probably attend two or three weddings a week, and at each of these celebrations they probably receive the honor to recite a blessing. In a way, I wonder if this gives them the degree of happiness that I saw on my friends’ faces.

*“And Hashem said, ‘I have forgiven because of your (Moshe’s) words.’”*

Moshe’s ability to create peace extended beyond the relationship of man to his fellow. Moshe was able to make peace between Hashem and man. Like Moses, Rabbi Edelstein made peace between secular and religious, between religious and *very* religious. Rabbi Baruch Dov Povarsky, Rabbi Edelstein’s successor as head of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, wept as he said, “Not too many people can be compared to Moses. His humility, devotion and wisdom are a guiding light for generations to come.”

The humility and kindness of the righteous live beyond the grave. Even in his passing, Rabbi Edelstein gladdened the hearts of othe.

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# TALMUD TIPS

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by Rabbi Moshe Newman

## Gittin 30-36

### Annulment

“Whoever marries does so according to the agreement of the Rabbis, and the Rabbis dissolved the marriage from him.”

This statement is taught in our *daf* to explain how a get that was given to an agent to deliver and was nullified by the husband in the presence of Beit Din is still considered to be valid, and therefore the wife who receives it will not be married. This explains the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, who says that a husband who transgresses the decree of Rabban Gamliel Hazaken in the *Mishna* on 32a that forbids nullifying a get that has been sent with an agent, even in the presence of a Beit Din – “cannot nullify it or add onto his condition.” As a result, they are not married.

The commentaries explain that Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel’s reason for “dissolving” the marriage if this occurs is because we look at every marriage as being made *conditionally*. If the Rabbis agree to it, it is a marriage; if not, it is not. Therefore, the *gemara* explains that if the husband nullifies the get in this proscribed way, we view it as if the Rabbis did not agree with this marriage from the very beginning. In other words, since the marriage is conditional on the Rabbis agreeing to it, in the event that a husband acts in this manner, the Rabbis do not agree to the marriage and the “condition” necessary for the marriage to be valid is not fulfilled. In this sense, the marriage is not really “dissolved”; rather, the marriage never really took place. (Rashi)

If the marriage never took place, we would expect the money the man gave her initially for marriage to return to him at the end. However, Rashi writes in this same *sugya*, that when the Rabbis don’t agree to the marriage the initial money is now considered to be a *gift* for her, and not as money for *kiddushin* which would now return to him. Why is the money a gift for her to keep? Since the Rabbis declared that the condition wasn’t fulfilled and that the marriage never happened, shouldn’t she need to return the money?

One explanation is that the “trigger” which sets off the disqualified marriage is the mere statement of the husband to nullify the get. Only words. No action. The power of these words is enough to undo the *power* of his words of marriage that he originally spoke to the woman (and invoke the Rabbis not wanting the marriage and therefore not fulfilling the condition of their consent), but the words are not “strong enough” to undo the *action* of his originally giving her the money. She therefore keeps the money and it is considered as a gift. (See Maharitz Chiyut, who discusses this subject at length).

▪ Gittin 33a

## Pruzbul

“What is the meaning of the word ‘pruzbul’? An enactment for the benefit of the ‘buli’ and the ‘buti’.” (Gemara)

The Mishna on *daf* 34b states that Hillel and his Beit Din introduced a halachic device called “*pruzbul*,” which causes loans to remain intact and not be erased in the Shemita year. This is one of a number of decrees taught in our *perek* that were made for *tikun olam* — “fixing the world” in the sense that society will function in a smooth and healthy manner. The rich will be willing to lend, and the poor will be able to find lenders, since the fear of the debt being cancelled by the Shemita year is not a factor.

Regarding the word “*pruzbul*,” Rashi explains that “*pruz*” means “*takana*” or a positive enactment; *buli* refers to the wealthy people who lend; and *buti* refers to the impoverished ones who borrow.

However, the word used for this enactment is not “*pruzbulibuti*,” which would make reference to both the wealthy and the poor; rather, it mentions only *buli* — the wealthy. Where is the reference to the *poor* found in the word “*pruzbul*”?

One answer is that the letters *tet* and *lamed* are interchangeable according to a particular linguistic system in kabbalistic teachings. Therefore, the *lamed* in the word refers to *both* types of people. However, *buli* is the preferred word to appear in the word “*pruzbul*” since the rich people (*buli*) are the ones who need to actually write the *pruzbul* in order to insure that they can collect their loans even after Shemita. (Maharsha)

Gittin 36b

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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**K**orach, Datan and Aviram, and 250 leaders of Israel rebel against the authority of Moshe and Aharon. The rebellion results in their being swallowed by the earth. Many resent their death and blame Moshe. G-d's "anger" is manifest by a plague that besets the nation, and many thousands perish. Moshe intercedes once again for the people. He instructs Aharon to atone for them and the plague stops.

Then, G-d commands that staffs, each inscribed with the name of one of the tribes, be placed in the Mishkan. In the morning, the staff of Levi, bearing Aharon's name, sprouts, buds, blossoms and yields ripe almonds. This provides Divine confirmation that Levi's tribe is chosen for priesthood and verifies Aharon's position as *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest. The specific duties of the *levi'im* and *kohanim* are stated. The *kohanim* were not to be landowners, but were to receive their sustenance from the tithes and other mandated gifts brought by the people. Also taught in this week's Torah portion are the laws of the first fruits, redemption of the firstborn and various laws of offerings.

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# Q & A

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## Questions –

1. Why did Datan and Aviram join Korach?
2. Why is Yaakov's name not mentioned in Korach's genealogy?
3. What motivated Korach to rebel?
4. What did Korach and company do when Moshe said that a *techelet* garment needs *tzizit*?
5. What warning did Moshe give the rebels regarding the offering of the incense?
6. Did Moshe want to be the *kohen gadol*?
7. What event did Korach not foresee?
8. What does the phrase *rav lachem* mean in this week's Parsha? (Give two answers.)
9. What lands are described in this week's Parsha as "flowing with milk and honey"?
10. When did Moshe have the right to take a donkey from the Jewish community?
11. What did Korach do the night before the final confrontation?
12. What sin did Datan and Aviram have in common specifically with Goliath?
13. Before what age is a person not punished by the Heavenly Court for his sins?
14. What happens to one who rebels against the institution of *kehuna*? Who suffered such a fate?
15. Why *specifically* was incense used to stop the plague?
16. Why was Aharon's staff placed in the middle of the other 11 staffs?
17. Aharon's staff was kept as a sign. What did it signify?
18. Why are the 24 gifts for the *kohanim* taught in this week's *Parsha*?
19. Who may eat the *kodshei kodashim* (most holy sacrifices) and where must they be eaten?
20. Why is G-d's covenant with the *kohanim* called "a covenant of salt"?

*All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.*

## Answers

1. 16:1 - Because they were his neighbors.
2. 16:1 - Yaakov prayed that his name not be mentioned in connection with Korach's rebellion (*Bereishet* 49:6).
3. 16:1 - Korach was jealous that Elizafan ben Uziel was appointed as leader of the family of Kehat instead of himself.
4. 16:1 - They laughed.
5. 16:6 - Only one person would survive.
6. 16:6 - Yes.
7. 16:7 - That his sons would repent.
8. 16:7,3 - *Rav lachem* appears twice in this week's Parsha. It means "much more than enough greatness have you taken for yourself (16:3)" and "It is a great thing I have said to you (16:17)."
9. 16:12 - Egypt and Canaan.
10. 16:15 - When he traveled from Midian to Egypt.
11. 16:19 - Korach went from tribe to tribe in order to rally support for himself.
12. 16:27 - They all blasphemed.
13. 16:27 - Twenty years old.
14. 17:5 - He is stricken with *tzara'at*, as was King Uziyahu (*Divrei HaYamim* II 26:16-19).
15. 17:13 - Because the people were deprecating the incense offering, saying that it caused the death of two of Aharon's sons and also the death of 250 of Korach's followers. Therefore G-d demonstrated that the incense offering was able to avert death, and it is sin, not incense, which causes death.
16. 17:21 - So people would not say that Aharon's staff bloomed because Moshe placed it closer to the *Shechina*.
17. 17:25 - That only Aharon and his children were selected for the *kehuna*.
18. 18:8 - Since Korach claimed the *kehuna*, the Torah emphasizes Aharon's and his descendants' rights to *kehuna* by recording the gifts given to them.
19. 18:10 - Male *kohanim* may eat them and only in the *azara* (forecourt of the *Beit Hamikdash*).
20. 18:19 - Just as salt never spoils, so this covenant will never be rescinded.

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

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## The One and Only

When Korach rebelled against the authority of Moses and Aaron, he engaged in a classical mudslinging campaign that accused Moses of monetary impropriety and taking public funds for personal use. Moses defended himself to Hashem by saying, “I did not take a donkey of one [*echad*] of them, and I did not do bad to one [*achad*] of them” (Num. 16:15). This verse uses two different words that mean “one,” *echad* and *achad*. As this essay will explore, the Bible uses several more words to mean “one” – like *echat*, *achat*, *chad*, *chadah*, and *ach*. Even though all of these words are built on basically the same few letters, this may not be a simple case of synonymy, but of discrete words that carry their own special meanings and connotations. (For another possible word for “one,” see my earlier essay “[The Number Eleven](#)” from July 2018.)

The word *echad* appear a whopping 634 times in the Bible. Indeed, in its simplest meaning, the word *echad* denotes the number one (as opposed to a different number), and in a more complex way, it refers to the unity of sub-parts that have joined together to become one.

Moreover, the rabbis understood that the word *echad* connotes something important and special, besides its typical numerical denotation. For example, the Talmud (*Megillah* 28a) postulates that the *Korban Tamid* ought to be brought from the choicest animal available, because the Torah states: “the one [*echad*] sheep shall you do in the morning, and the second sheep shall you do in the afternoon” (Num. 28:4). In this case, the word *echad* implies something more important and more special than the rest. Similarly, when King Saul sought out somebody to play music for him and asked his servants to help him find such a talented person, the Bible reports “and one [*echad*] of the lads answered...” (I Shmuel 17:18) without revealing who this was. Rashi (there) cites the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 93b) as explaining that this “one” refers to a lad who was special and important amongst the people of Saul’s entourage, identifying the person in question as none other than Doeg the Edomite.

The Rabbis see the term *echad* as especially associated with Hashem in many places. Perhaps most famously, it is used in the phrase *shema Yisroel, Hashem elokeinu, Hashem echad*, meaning, “Hear O Israel, Hashem our G-d – Hashem is one/unique [*echad*]” (Deut. 6:4). In line with this, the Midrash (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 18:10, *Tanchuma Korach* 7) explains that the term *echad* in the phrase “a donkey of one [*echad*] of them” refers to *hekadesh* (“consecrated property”), which belongs to Hashem, the Ultimate One. According to this Midrash, Moses pled his innocence by saying that he did not even take a donkey from “consecrated property” (unlike the standard operating procedure for political leaders who were accustomed to using such property for their personal needs) and was therefore certainly not guilty of the accusations that Korach levelled against him.

Now, the truth is, the way I translated the first clause in Moses’ defense against Korach’s campaign actually follows the explanation of Rashi (and Targum Onkelos), who explain the word *echad* as referring to “one” of the people, with Moses arguing that he did not even repossess a donkey from even “one” Jew. However, other commentators, including Rashi’s own grandson Rashbam (as well as Chizkuni and Ramban), render that clause differently: “I did not take one [*echad*] donkey from them.” They explain that *echad* must be referring to “donkey,” not one of the people, because otherwise the Torah should have used the word *achad* in this context, just like it did in the second clause of Moses’ defense, “And I did not do bad to one [*achad*] of them [the people].”

For more about the difference between *echad* and *achad*, plus all the discussion about *echat*, *achat*, *chad*, *chadah*, and *ach*, please take a look at this article’s continuation at: [https://ohr.edu/this\\_week/whats\\_in\\_a\\_word/](https://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/)

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# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

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by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

## KIDDUSH (Part 6 - conclusion)

### Unity through Separation

“Although you may enjoy the rest and the tranquility of Shabbat, have in mind that you are not observing the day for your own pleasure; rather to honor the One who commanded you to do so.”

Sefat Emet (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter)

*Kiddush concludes:* “For that day is the prelude to the holy convocations, a memorial of the Exodus from Egypt. For You chose us and You sanctified us from all the other nations. And you gave us Your holy Shabbat with love and favor as a heritage. Blessed are You, Hashem, Who sanctifies the Shabbat.”

As we pick up our glass of wine on Friday night and begin reciting the magical words of Kiddush, we attest that Hashem took us out of Egypt in order that we keep His Shabbat. As Rabbi Hirsch writes, “Shabbat is so much the basis of all of Judaism that one can truly say that by redeeming us from Egypt, Hashem had appointed our people to be the bearers of Shabbat.”

Rabbi Michael Lasry is one of the most powerful orators in the Hebrew-speaking world, exposing his listeners to the beauty and the majesty of Hashem’s mitzvahs with his unique delivery. A few years ago, he experienced a terrible personal tragedy – his young son drowned. Among the many who came to comfort him during the week of shivah was a group of extremely non-religious looking Jews, sporting multiple piercings and tattoos. Despite their appearance, they were actually his devoted students, who came out of respect and love for their Rabbi. Before leaving, they told him that in honor of his child, they were committed to keeping Shabbat one time, that very week. The Rabbi obviously touched, embraced them emotionally.

After they left, some of the others in the room turned to Rabbi Lasry and asked him, “One Shabbat? That’s it? All they will keep now is one Shabbat? Why didn’t you get them to commit themselves to keeping Shabbat from now on?”

To which Rabbi Lasry replied, “Do you know what I would give to spend just one more Shabbat with my son? To take him with me to shul, to share a story with him, to sing zemirot with him, to pinch his cheek just one more time? I would give everything I own for just one Shabbat. Hashem misses His children terribly. How much would He enjoy spending just one Shabbat with them!”

Friday night. Perhaps the most spiritually uplifting moment in our week. As we bid farewell to the mundane and usher in the extraordinary by reciting Kiddush, we reconnect to the essence of who we are. We are the children of Hashem. So beloved, that Hashem removed us from slavery in Egypt and gave us His Shabbat to sanctify and to cherish for eternity.

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# LETTER AND SPIRIT

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*Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman*

## Sleep On It

It seems that there is a Biblical source for “sleeping on it” – the decisions that need some thoughtful reflection and time and could benefit from the passage of night before they are made.

**K**orach and his cohorts – Datan, Aviram, and On ben Pelet – stirred an uprising accusing Moshe and Aharon of misappropriating the leadership for themselves, when, in reality, the entire community is holy. Two hundred and fifty men joined the rebellion. Moshe heard their message and fell upon his face. His words to them: *Let morning come, and then Hashem will make known who is His and who is the holy one... Whoever He will choose, He will allow him to come near to Him [serve as High Priest]* (Bamidbar 16:5) The test that Moshe devised would mean that each of the men risked their lives, knowing that if they participate, and are not selected as priests, they would die.

Hashem did not need the night to think it over, and neither did Moshe. But Moshe wanted Korach and his followers to sleep on it. Well, not exactly to sleep – but to use the nighttime to reflect before taking action. Since the dispute would be decided by the destruction of the rebels, they were to be given time to come to their senses, particularly in the quiet and seclusion of the night, when everyone returns to the company of their own family and is free to commune with himself. There, at night, in his home, he is removed from the influence of inciting companions. Day is a time for activity, but night is a time for study and reflection. This is symbolized by the fact that the oil of the *ner tamid* – representing wisdom and Torah – was to remain lit from “evening until morning,” during the time most suited for contemplation.

Moshe also wanted to utilize this time to remonstrate with those who had gone astray, and he spends the rest of the day attempting to persuade them. He approached Korach, and separately approached Datan and Aviram. Moshe understood that Korach had two motives. One, he was standing up for the rights of his tribe of Levi, which he felt were violated by the preference given to Aharon. Second, he sought the honor of the priesthood for himself, a motive that he disguised as an argument for equal rights for all. Datan and Aviram, on the other hand, primarily opposed Moshe’s political leadership. Thus, Moshe’s messages of persuasion were tailored to each. The hope was that, upon reflection, the men would come to their senses.

There was a fourth rabble-rouser listed in the verse, who we never hear about again – On ben Pelet. According to the Sages, when he was removed from the influence of the others, in the privacy of his own tent, his wife persuaded him to give up the rebellion. Similarly, the children of Korach, at the moment of decision, righted themselves and were spared the fate decreed upon their father.

Even in the description of Creation, the morning comes after the night – *And it was evening, and it was morning*, is the refrain after each day of Creation. The word for morning, *boker*, is related to the word meaning to distinguish (*l’vaker*), for it is the time where the outlines of things emerge and it is possible to distinguish one thing from the other. Perhaps this applies not only in the physical dimension, but also in the realm of thought – things can become clear only after a nighttime reflection, removed from the influences of the day. The contemplation that night affords can often clarify complexities and allow our minds and hearts to tease apart the logical from the illogical and the good motives from the bad motives – emerging with clearly defined convictions and conclusions in the *boker*.

- Sources: Commentary, Bamidbar 18:5, Shemot 27:20-21, Ber. 1:5

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# PEREK SHIRA: THE SONG OF EXISTENCE

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by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

## THE SONG OF THE CAT

The Cat says: “*I will pursue my enemies and reach them, and I shall not turn back until I annihilate them!*” (Tehillim 18:38)

**D**espite its small size and generally timid nature, the cat is an adept hunter. It has a flexible body, sharp teeth and protractible claws. It has especially keen senses. It can search for prey even at night, requiring only one-sixth of the light needed for human vision. It can hear a wide range of sounds, even ultrasonic calls made by rodent prey. The cat has quick reflexes and an acute sense of balance, with an uncanny ability to right itself in the middle of a fall. It stalks its prey with confidence, always hunting alone. Most notably, cats are highly efficiency in hunting pests, such as crop-destroying mice. When farmers realized this, they began to domesticate cats, which quickly spread throughout the world.

The cat has a unique lesson – and a song. It teaches of the virtue of modesty. In fact, the Sages remark that if the Torah would not have been given, we would have learned the virtue of modesty from the cat. It has a generally timid and reserved nature. More specifically, the cat expresses its modesty in the private way in which it performs its bodily functions, unlike the shameless way of other animals. It defecates out of sight, thereafter covering its excrement. It is similarly modest in its secretive mating conduct.

The cat's refinement in these matters is most significant, as the Torah commands us to keep our encampment clean of both waste matter and immoral behavior in order that Hashem's Presence can rest upon us, and thereby we will merit protection and victory over our foes. With the cat's success as a hunter, it expresses this lesson. Also notable, there is a Talmudic teaching that one who conducts himself with modesty in the lavatory merits protection from snakes and scorpions, which are amongst the more potent prey of the cat. Remarkably, cats are mostly immune to snake venom.

With every leap, the cat sings of the battle cry of King David as he leapt with confidence to destroy the enemies of Israel: “*I will pursue my enemies and reach them, and I shall not turn back until I annihilate them.*”

We can learn modesty from the cat. We should our best to keep our habitats clean from both physical and spiritual obscenities, allowing Hashem to rest His Presence and blessing upon us. In fact, our pristine souls, breaths of Hashem Himself, yearn for nothing more than the purest and holiest of lives. Yet, our bodies, which were fashioned from the earth, pull towards that which is base, lowly, and even foul. As Jews, it is natural for us to conduct ourselves with modesty, as it is one of inherent traits of our people, to the extent that bashfulness is said to be the sign of a Jew. When we live in the way that befits Hashem's nation, we merit His blessings and we can leap at our goals with confidence.

*\*Sources: Devarim 23:15; Sifra 258, cited in Lechem Rav; Bishmi v'Lichwodi Brasiv, based on Berachos 62a; Rashi to Shabbos 128b; Sichas Chullin pg. 347; Eiruvin 100b, and Rashi, Rabbeinu Chananel, and Rashash*

*\*In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*